



**Fourtneswell Outpatients Unit
Dorset County Hospital
Williams Avenue
Dorchester
Dorset DT1 2JY**

Vaccination Advice for Patients Receiving Treatment for Cancer

Our immune system is used to fight infections, bacteria, and viruses. Cancer, and receiving treatment for cancer, can weaken the immune system and reduce how effective it is.

It is important to know which vaccines are safe to be given when people have a weakened immune system (immunosuppression). Some vaccines contain 'live' virus and can **cause infections in people with a weakened immune system**.

If you are receiving a weekly treatment, ask your Consultant when an ideal time to have a vaccine is.

Influenza

Flu Vaccines have been used since the 1960's. It is recommended for:

- Patients on chemotherapy
- People who are immunosuppressed
- Everyone over age of 50 years

This should ideally be given two or three days prior to treatment.

Pneumococcal (Pneumonia)

Everyone over the age of 65 years is offered the vaccine. It covers strains of bacteria which can prevent pneumonia. Ideally, this should be given two or three days before treatment. If you are on a daily anti-cancer tablet – please seek advice from your Consultant.

Shingles

This is a painful condition, presenting as a rash, which is caused by the same virus as chicken pox.

In immunosuppressed people the virus can be reactivated. Shingles is not contagious, although chicken pox can be caught from being in contact with someone who has shingles.

If you think you have shingles, please do not attend the hospital but telephone the Acute Oncology Service.

There are two vaccines for shingles:

Zostavax – This is a **LIVE** vaccine.

Shingrix – This is **NOT** a live vaccine.

It is recommended that a person with a weakened immune system should not receive the LIVE vaccine.

If recommended by your Consultant, you can have the shingles vaccine a month before chemotherapy commences, but within two weeks if this is not possible.

If you have a blood cancer disorder, have received a bone marrow transplant, are less than six months from finishing chemotherapy, receiving monoclonal antibody therapy (drugs ending in 'MAB') or are taking the drugs called Bendamustine, Fludarabine or Clofarabine, **YOU MUST ASK YOUR CONSULTANT FOR ADVICE.**

Covid-19 Vaccines

Patients receiving anti-cancer treatments, chemotherapy and radiotherapy should receive the vaccination. It should be ideally given two to three days prior to treatment.

Covid-19 precautions should continue to be exercised whenever possible, as it is not clear how effective the vaccine will be in those with a weakened immune system, by cancer or by chemotherapy.

Covid-19: 2nd Dose and Booster

These are recommended and should be ideally two to three days prior to treatment.

COVID-19: 3rd Dose

It is recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that a third primary dose should be offered to patients who have received either of the first two doses while immune compromised.

Live Vaccines (including Travel Vaccines)

Live vaccine should be avoided, as you may contract the illness that you are trying to protect against. This may be due to your cancer, chemotherapy treatment or the weakened immune system. You should not receive:

Measle vaccination

Mumps vaccination

Rubella vaccination

Oral Polio

Yellow fever

Varicella (chickenpox) vaccination

If you are planning any foreign travel, please speak to your Consultant about vaccinations before making any arrangements.

Contact Numbers:

We hope that you have found this information useful. If you have any questions or are worried about anything, please speak to the following Dorset County Hospital Staff:

The Fortuneswell Outpatient Unit

Tracey Turnbull: Senior Sister
Lizzie Charnley: Receptionist / Ward Clerk

Tel: 01305 254359
Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

Please do not leave emergency messages on this number.

Should you become unwell, please contact the 24-hour emergency telephone number:

Acute Oncology Service 01305 255995

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Author(s): Lisa Newey, Clinical Nurse Specialist
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Written: November 2021
Approved: January 2022
Review date: January 2025
Edition: v2

If you have feedback regarding the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, or if you would like a list of references used to develop this leaflet, please email pals@dchft.nhs.uk



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